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Authors
Redmond, L
Henry, CP

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THE ROOTS OF BLACK STUDIES

By

Lea Redmond and Charles P. Henry

A Negro of Washington, C.C. could scarcely believe his eyes when he read in the newspapers that Jim Crow had been ended in the restaurants of his city. He was overjoyed. He had never expected to live to see the day. Since the miracle had happened, however, he decided to experience it for himself—at least once. But he would not act too hastily. The change-over was bound to take a little time. He decided to wait three weeks.

Then on Sunday evening he put on his best clothes caught a taxi and directed the driver to one of the most elegant restaurants he knew.

He was greeted with a smile at the door and again inside, where the waiter gave him his choice of locations and placed a handsome menu in his hand. The Negro put on his glasses and began reading attentively. He perused the menu so long, in fact, that the waiter, still courtesy itself, came over and asked if he was ready to order.

The Negro looked perplexed. "I don't see any chitterlings here," he said.

"No, I'm afraid we don't have any chitterlings," the waiter agreed.

Once more the customer scanned the menu. "How about turnip greens and ham hock?"

Puzzlement turned to frustration on the face of the desegregated Negro. "I'd like to order black-eyed peas and hog jowl."

"We don't have that either," the waiter told him sadly.

The Negro put his glasses back in their case, pushed his chair back and rose slowly. 'You folks,' he observed thoughtfully, 'you folks just ain't ready for integration.' [1]

The plight of the "desegregated Negro" serves as a perfect metaphor for the development of Black Studies in the United States. Histories of Black Studies often view its development as emerging from the Black Power movement with no link to the Civil Rights movement. At worst, they present civil rights and Black power as opposites. Our analysis links the two movements together as essential to the formation of Black Studies. It then complicates that relationship by highlighting elements of each movement that contribute to variations in the architecture of Black Studies.

Like Hughes and Bontemps' diner, African Americans were elated that the walls of Jim Crow—American apartheid—had formally crumbled before the onslaught of civil rights activists and their supporters. By the mid –sixties the passage of three civil rights bills and a voting rights act led to a general optimism about the future of integration. Desegregation of such public spaces as restaurants and schools assured the physical presence of Blacks in areas they had limited or no access to before.

Once inside those spaces, however, African Americans became concerned that both menus and curriculums ignored their heritage and culture. The price of integration—admission to these public spaces—was assimilation of the dominant culture. Frustration over their invisibility led to the creation of new alternative spaces. Some of these new spaces, called Black Studies, began to challenge the legitimacy of the dominant culture. That is, they challenged the ownership of knowledge production and the uses of knowledge as a product.

The "citizenship schools" of the early civil rights movement flow directly from the influence of the Highlander Folk School on Septima Clark and others. Highlander, which itself drew from a Danish Folk School tradition that had influenced Booker T.

Washington, performed three roles according to Aldon Morris. It pulled together local Black leadership across the region. It provided a visible and successful model of a future integrated society. And it developed a successful mass education program.[2] Yet it is the pedagogy of Highlander that has the greatest impact on Black Studies.

Basic to Highlander's philosophy was that oppressed people know the answers to their own problems. Highlander provided the teacher's to guide them in their search for solutions but just as importantly, it provided the "free space" to share experiences and build solidarity. Highlander staff also recognized that the most successful folk schools were emotionally-charged and therefore engaged students with music and dance.

Jane Mansbridege and Aldon Morris contend that four elements are essential to the development of oppositional consciousness. First, individuals must identify themselves as members of a subordinate group. Second, they must identify injustice done to that group. Third, they must oppose the injustices and fourth, they must share an interest in ending or diminishing those injustices.[3] Highlander provided the institutional resources, including the "free space" that permitted local Black leaders to interact with each other, support each other and create solutions.

When Clark placed the Highlander experience within the contest of the emerging civil rights movement, the ideational resources and emotional involvement combined to make the citizenship schools a success. The focus was on gaining the tools of literacy which both historically and currently at that time in the South constituted an act of rebellion. However, literacy was seen as a means to a larger end of voting.

With the development of the Freedom Schools, SNCC had developed a more mature oppositional consciousness. It had moved beyond the more narrow concerns of

voting and civil rights to identify a system of domination and its beneficiaries. Freedom school participants move beyond the desired objects the majority culture has such as literacy and the vote to ask what does the majority culture have that we don't want! Moreover, echoing W.E.B. DuBois, what do we have that we want to keep. Thus, the Freedom Schools have advanced to a sense of efficacy that leads them to reject aspects of the dominant culture. Integration has ceased being one way.

The transformation of Citizenship Schools into Freedom Schools is mirrored by SNCC's transformation from an organizational focused on civil rights to one promoting Black power. SNCC leader, Stokely Carmichael, who popularized the phrase Black power, described it as "the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves, and our relationship to society, and to have these terms recognized." [4] Carmichael's views were influential among young Blacks, many entering college for the first time in the mid-to-late sixties. They provide a near perfect definition of the motivation of those students demanding the creation of Black Studies courses and programs across the nation and especially on White college campuses. The students brought emotional involvement and commitment but they would demand and need institutional resources and "free space."

In 1964 there were 234,000 Black collegians and slightly over half were enrolled in historically Black colleges. By 1970, there were nearly a half million Blacks enrolled in college and only one-third were in Black schools. Even with this increase, Blacks comprised less than six percent of the nation's total college enrollment in 1969. Yet this relatively small percentage of college students were extremely active. An American Council on Education study discovered that 57 percent of all campus protests in 1968-69

involved Black students.[5] In the seven year period from 1968 to 1975 over 500 academic units began offering a Bachelor's degree in Black Studies.[6]

While sixties student activists in general have been characterized as anti-institutional, anti-authoritarian and centered on self-expression, there are some significant differences between the White student activists and students of color. These differences might be expected given the different life experiences of the young activists. Many Black students were the first in their families to attend college and a larger number than ever came from working class and poor backgrounds. They rejected, however, the notion that college was the route toward an upward mobility that would distance them from their roots. Resisting the so-called bourgeois values of campus socialization they sought to remain connected to their communities of origin. Beyond connection, they wanted to bring the resources of institutions of higher learning to the service of these communities.

These differences between White and Black student activists are dramatically illustrated in events at the University of California at Berkeley. The Free Speech movement at Berkeley in 1964 is widely credited as the beginning of a new era of student activism on college campuses. It is also widely-known that Mario Savio and other leaders of the Free Speech movement had been student volunteers in the South during Mississippi Freedom Summer.[7] What is less well-known is the interaction between these White student activists and Black student activists who eventually sought to develop a Black Studies department and a Third World college at Berkeley.

In April 1960, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born, significantly changing the modern Civil Rights

movement. SNCC would “move beyond the operational methods and perspectives of older civil rights groups,” in particular the NAACP, CORE and the SCLC. With SNCC, the Civil Rights struggle in America would shift its focus and ideology, altering the movement drastically. By 1960, newer, younger participants in the struggle for equality were beginning to wear thin, to become bitter with the slow progress being made. Years of fighting against a system of discrimination and oppression was in need of a new strategy. There would still be protest, but the protest would be focused on “group-centeredness” rather than a rigid, male-centered hierarchy. This structure allowed for individuals to take independent action and for SNCC became “a group that depended on individual initiative and doers” (Giddings, p. 277). The birth of SNCC “detonated a movement within a movement...and students would become the catalyst of a movement that forced a nation to examine its most fundamental values” (Giddings, p. 273). And, it was this new student involvement and organization that assisted in the major legal decisions of the decade, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voter Rights Act of 1965, as well as sweeping educational changes on college and university campuses across the country.

It is important to understand that this shift in ideology didn’t happen overnight; rather, the struggle that had been occurring for

years was entering a new stage and the previous tactics and the demographics of the movement were changing. The South was where most of the Civil Rights struggle was originally forged. The majority of the black population lived in the South and Jim Crow segregation and oppression of black people was most rampant in this part of the United States. There are two major signifying events that can be seen as the igniting of the Civil Rights movement. The first such event was the *1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas,* Supreme Court decision which declared that separate education facilities were inherently unequal. This decision "proved that the Southern segregation system could be challenged and defeated" and "...that change was possible" (Marable, p.23).

In 1955, the Montgomery Bus Boycott definitively began the modern Civil Rights movement. The impetus for the strike came after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white passenger because "her feet hurt." Local residents organized a bus strike to show a "day long gesture of solidarity with Parks" in which "over 90 percent of the blacks who ordinarily rode the buses stayed off" (Sitkoff, p.40). The strike lasted 381 days and out of it came, "...an effective strategy for social change, and a determined spirit that Jim Crow could be ended, that life could be better. Historians eventually would look back to Montgomery

as the Cradle of the New Negro" (Sitkoff, p.40). That moment in 1955 would set off further boycotts, sit-ins, and marches. The Brown decision gave the movement the hope that the legal system could work in favor of blacks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott exemplified the collective power of blacks and the potential of grassroots organization.

The Civil Rights movement's activities were established through different organizations that were formed to further the struggle. Many of the earlier organizations focused on the struggle for integration, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As well as organizations, youth and students always played a role in the movement. In retrospect, it could easily be realized that without this student participation, the Civil Rights movement wouldn't have been successful. But the students who formed SNCC charted a different path than the youth involved in the earlier struggle. The first step that the students took in the movement for equality was to perform "sit-ins" at segregated lunch counters keeping in line with the integration push. SNCC, one of the most notable student organizations, was formed in April 1960 when students from different southern black colleges realized the need for an organization that could "preserve the

spontaneity and the militancy of the sit-ins" (Carson, p.18). SNCC's formation arose from the need to collectively organize sit-ins, and the student organization chose to adopt the philosophy of non-violent direct action, which was also the philosophy of the SCLC and CORE. SCLC played a major role in getting SNCC off the ground, particularly with the support and encouragement of Ella Baker who fought to keep SNCC an independent student organization. In fact, SNCC's first office was a corner of the SCLC headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia (Carson, p.25).

A key component to this organization, much like most of the Civil Rights movement, was the interracial population. Much of the Civil Rights struggle included white liberals who were also appalled at the system that denied blacks many of their rights as citizens, including the right to vote. Through many of SNCC's desegregation and voter registration campaigns throughout the South, white and black protesters stood side by side fighting these injustices. SNCC's first secretary was Jane Stembridge, a student at Union Theological Seminary and the daughter of a white Baptist minister from Virginia (Sitkoff, p.25). There were many reasons why it was beneficial for SNCC to become an interracial organization. One factor, according to Charles Sherrod, one of SNCC's project directors in 1962-1963, was that it was beneficial in order to "free southern blacks from their fear

of whites" (Carson, p.75). Another factor in white inclusion was that their participation helped in the media coverage of SNCC's activities. Because many of the protests or voter registration movements were met with violence, more national attention was given if someone white was hurt, jailed or killed. This was especially true because many of the young white students who were involved came from private colleges in the north and from wealthy families. The Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964 exemplified how hundreds of white volunteers helped bring the Summer Project front-page coverage (Sitkoff, p. 166). Unfortunately, blacks understood too well the realities of the situation in the south and the little attention or action taken when a black person is attacked or even killed. It was this summer that impacted higher education on a level that has been overlooked.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 focused on voter registration and education of blacks across Mississippi. It was the voter registration work that made the front pages of the newspapers. The tragic murder of three of those workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner will forever be the most unforgettable event of the summer. **Add about violence/statistics.** The Freedom Schools had relatively low status value. People wanted change faster than the schools brought it. The educational aspect of

the summer seemingly lacked the more dangerous element of the voter registration campaign, even though Freedom School teachers were consistently harassed and beaten and many of their schools were burnt to the ground. The teachers in the Freedom Schools were considered second-class citizens compared to the voter registration workers. Women tended to comprise a majority of the Freedom School teachers and just as women's work has traditionally been undervalued in society at large, so did it tend to be on the projects in the movement that were dominated by women. (McAdam, p. 110) Although the original idea of the Freedom School component was that of Charlie Cobb, a black man, the influence can be traced back to the citizenship schools of the 1950's.

Septima Clark organized the first citizenship school in the mid-1950's. Clark was influenced by her experience with the Highlander Folk Schools which were co-founded by Myles Horton during the Depression. The Highlander Folk Schools were a "change-oriented institution" initially for the Appalation poor to take collective action and responsibility for improving their lives. By the mid-1950's it became an important place for civil rights leaders to meet and defied most state laws prohibiting blacks and whites to eat, sleep, etc. in the same building. (Payne, pp. 69-71)

Septima Clark, a teacher, first visited the Highlander School in 1954 and quickly became a regular. In 1956 Clark was hired as the director of workshops at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee after she lost her job as a school teacher for refusing to give up her membership to the NAACP. State law barred state employees from being members of the NAACP. From her experience at the Highlander Schools, she established the first Citizenship School in the mid-1950's on Johns Island in the guise of the Progressive Club. Clark felt strongly that segregation would not end until black people had the right to vote. At the time, in many Southern states, the law stipulated that you could not register to vote unless you were able to read parts of the state constitutions. (Brown, p. 8) Clark was committed to change this by teaching blacks to read and write and decided that citizenship schools were the answer. Esau Jenkins, a former student of Clarke's, who also attended the Highlander School started the Progressive Club or "the Club" and Clark's cousin Bernice Robinson was the first teacher. The "Club" located in the back of a grocery store became the first Citizenship School. Concerned about the reaction from the white community the store façade was crucial for the school to be successful. Septima Clark explained,

> We planned the grocery store to fool white people. We didn't want them to know that we had a school back there. We said

> we'd divide the think into three parts. One part would be for the grocery store, and two rooms in the back would be for teaching. We didn't have any windows back there at the time, so that white people couldn't peep in. That's the way we planned it. (Clark, p. 47)

Methodologically, the citizenship schools had an important impact on the curriculum of the Freedom Schools and beyond. Clark realized that the traditional method of teaching by speaking *to* students would not work. Teaching and learning would be a process incorporating the students experiences into the materiel and curriculum.

By 1961 there were 37 Citizenship Schools on the islands and the nearby mainland. (cite Payne) Clark had recruited and trained 81 teachers. Black voting strength increased significantly. "The aim of the schools, though was to create involved citizens, not just voters. Citizenship-School students helped start a credit union, a nursing home, a kindergarten, and a low-income housing project." Highlander spread the Citizenship Schools across the South. Eventually, there were nearly 10,000 teachers and two hundred schools **(WHERE)**. Clark believed that the main goal of the schools was for the discovering and development of local community leaders. Some of the people who became teachers could barely read or write but they could teach. The Citizenship Schools became an organizing tool for activists

in Mississippi and the South.(CHECK THIS IN PAYNE BOOK) "Once you bring people together to talk about literacy, you can get them to talk about a great many other things." (Payne, pp. 73-75) Clark stated,

> "It was 1962 before the major civil rights groups were ready to do something about voter registration. But we had developed the ideas of the Citizenship Schools between 1957 and 1961. So all the civil rights groups could use our approach, because by then we knew it worked." (Clark, p. 70)

While the Citizenship Schools grew out of a need for blacks to read and write in order to register to vote, the idea of the Freedom Schools grew out of the need to remedy the inadequacy of the public school system in Mississippi. Charles Cobb, a SNCC staff member developed the idea in the fall of 1963 and submitted a written proposal titled "Prospectus for a Summer School Program." (Brooks, 28) Cobb believed that Mississippi had formed an "intellectual and creative vacuum" in the lives of young black Mississippians. The Freedom Schools were necessary because of the "complete absence of academic freedom" which repressed "intellectual curiosity and different thinking." Specifically, Cobb wanted to get young black Mississippians to "articulate their own desires, demands and questions." Hundreds of northern college students would be arriving in the summer of 1964 and Cobb believed that as some of the best minds in the country they

should become teachers for the summer**. THIS TYPE OF EDUCATION WAS NEW** (Carson, p. 109)

The students that came to Mississippi to teach during Freedom Summer became aware of the grossly unequal school system. In 1960, the median number of years in school for whites over the age of twenty-five was eleven compared to six for blacks. In 1964, the average expenditure for white pupils was $81.86 compared to $21.77 for black pupils. In rural areas the gap was even greater. For example, in Holly Bluff $191.70 was spent for each white pupil compared to $1.26 for each black pupil. (McAdam, pp. 24-25, McCord, p.35) Mississippi was one of only two states without mandatory education laws. This allowed for black schools in the delta to close for the fall because students provided a cheap source of labor for the cotton harvest. (McAdam, p. 83) Consequently, in 1960 only 16,000 blacks in Mississippi received their secondary diploma compared to 168,000 whites. The school system exemplified the huge inequities in more that just the educational life of black Mississippians. Many white Mississippians feared that school integration would lead to "total race mixture." In 1964, Medford Evans, a Citizen's Council leader stated that " Race-mixing is as irreversible as scrambling an egg. Easy to do, impossible to undo." Evans went on to exclaim in response to school integration that "If that is what the law requires, than the law be

damned!" (McCord, p. 36) Jim Crow firmly entrenched blacks to a life on all levels that was both separate and unequal.

Charles Cobb was determined to change the educational experience of black Mississippians rather than challenging the segregationist establishment. He believed that the Freedom Schools needed to help students in Mississippi overcome the accommodationist tradition that was central to the education of young black Mississippians. Mississippi school curriculum was carefully controlled and the textbooks used in the schools often glorified the southern way of life ignoring any achievements by black Americans. Some school superintendents even refused to allow the history of Reconstruction period to be taught. (McAdam, 83) The teachers being recruited were told the purpose of the freedom schools was to "provide and educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives, and ultimately, new directions for action." (Carson, 110) In Cobb's original prospectus he quotes from a recent speech given by University of Mississippi Professor James Silver who exclaimed that there were "Negro students who have been thrown out of classes for asking questions about the Freedom Rides, or voting. Negro teachers have been fired for saying the wrong thing. The State

of Mississippi destroys ‘smart niggers’ and its classrooms remain intellectual waste lands.” (Hughes, p.27)

Charles Cobb’s original plan was to focus on tenth and eleventh grade students. This focus was to ensure a “working force that remains in the state high schools putting to use what is has learned.” Cobb’s strategy would

1) Supplement what they aren’t learning in high school around the state,
2) Give them a broad intellectual and academic experience during the summer to bring back fellow students in the classrooms in the state and
3) Form the basis for student action such as school boycotts, based on their increased awareness.

This proposal would create a curriculum with cultural programs, political and social studies and even a student newspaper. Cobb firmly believed that in order to break the power structure blacks need to create their own institutions to ‘replace the old, unjust, decadent ones.” Education in Mississippi was one of the institutions that could be replaced. (Brooks, p. 27-28)

The idea for the Freedom Schools attracted educators, clergymen, and civil rights figures, including SNCC staff members, from across the country who gathered in New York from March 21-22,

1964. The group met to work on the curriculum for the schools to add the "necessary curricular flesh to the bones of Cobb's proposal." (McAdam, p. 83) The meeting solidified that the aim of the Freedom School curriculum was to "challenge the student's curiosity about the world, introduce him to his particularly 'Negro' cultural background, and teach him basic literacy skills in one integrated program." In addition, in was clarified that the

> "...purpose of the Freedom Schools is to create an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and find alternatives – ultimately new directions for action."

An early organizational structure would focus on four principal areas:

1) remedial education
2) leadership development
3) contemporary issues
4) non-academic curriculum (McAdam p. 83, see Rothchild, p. 95)

When Staughton Lynd became the Director of the Freedom School the curriculum was simplified to consist of three general areas: 1) academic work, 2) recreation and cultural activities, and 3) leadership development. Lynd believed that ..."[t]hese three will be integrated

into one learning experience, rather than...the kind of fragmented learning and living that characterized much of contemporary education." (Holt, pp. 103-4) The freedom school teachers understood that the schools were to develop leaders. These were revolutionary leaders needed to revolutionize the system.

> "Bluntly the teacher had been told that they had about eight weeks develop those leaders needed and that there'd be no need to search for them; every morning when they said "hello" the leadership potential would be standing there before them. The need was for revolutionary leaders, and attending the freedom schools was an act of defiance of Mississippi, a state where defiance, by definition is revolutionary." (Holt, pp. 104-5)

Experiences of the Freedom School Teachers

During the summer of 1964, Elizabeth Sutherland spent one month in Mississippi traveling throughout the state talking to the volunteers about their experiences. In the year following Mississippi Freedom Summer she published a book on the experiences of the volunteers written in letters during that summer. She joined the staff of SNCC after completion of the book. Of the Freedom School volunteers she wrote:

> The Freedom Schools stood for everything which the regular schools had discouraged. They were a sort of

> mental revolutions requiring special tactics: a “citizenship curriculum” in which reading writing and speaking skills would be developed through discussion of Negro history, literature, the Movement, and the Mississippi power structure.

Everything taught, whether it was Negro history or algebra was taught “with an emphasis on life as the Negroes knew it.” (Sutherland, pp. 94-95). When the students fought for Black Studies at colleges and universities across the country their purpose was the same as that of the teachers in the Freedom Schools. One Freedom School teacher in Greenwood, Mississippi wrote: “Our purpose is to expand awareness, to fortify what the student already knows – although inarticulately- that he is a human being and deserving of respect.” (Sutherland, pp.90-91)

Once the teachers began working with the students they were shocked at how little they knew. One teacher in Canton, Mississippi wrote that these 6th/ 7th grade students thought the capital of the United States was Jackson and that there were 82 states in the U.S. (there were 82 counties in Mississippi. Another teacher in Mount Bayou wrote that the county superintendent of schools ordered that Negro schools could not teach foreign languages, civics or American History from 1860 to 1875. (Sutherland, pp. 92-92).

“The Negro response to the opening of the Freedom Schools was dramatic: by midsummer, 41 schools with 2165 pupils had been established. (pp.93-94) (Sutherland)

Payne, Charles M. I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition of the Mississippi Freedom Struggle, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 1995

It is well-known that a number of students who were active in the civil rights movement, especially freedom summer, went on to play key roles in the development of Northern campus-based movements such as Free Speech, Black Studies and Women’s Studies, however, the nature of that connection has seldom been explored.[8]

"Abusive, intolerant, intemperate, illiberal and insulting to the intelligence of Americans of all races," California's Lieutenant Governor Glenn Anderson declared, in response to Stokely Carmichael's speech at the Black Power Conference in Berkeley. It was 1966 and white radical students at U. C. Berkeley embraced the Black Power Movement by organizing a day long conference on "Black Power and its Challenges"

that rocked the Greek Theater on the twenty ninth of October.[1] At the time of the conference the climate at U.C. Berkeley was one of constant protest which began in the early sixties when the Free Speech Movement swept across the campus. The early-to-mid sixties era of student movements and protest in the North mainly revolved around white radical students initiatives, although they often needed general liberal support.[2] This conference, though, was the first major event that focused on a topic involving the Black struggle in America. It would also be the last, until after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination two years later.

Issues such as freedom of speech and the Vietnam War were salient to the mostly white middle-class population that made up the majority of the student body. In 1966, the mainly white "New Left",[3] Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was in the midst of anti-Vietnam war protests when the Black Power Movement emerged. As they embraced this new movement, they often connected it to their protest of the war in Vietnam. In fact, the editorial page of the campus newspaper had two pieces, side by side, one on "Black Power Day" and the other on "The Human Costs of the War." The article on the war in Vietnam even tied the proposed Black Power Conference to the anti-war

[1] The Daily Californian 10/31/66, p.1.
[2] Todd Gitlin, The Sixties Years of Hope. Days of Rage, New York, 1987, p.127
[3] Gitlin, The Sixties Years of Hope, Days of Rage- p.5-6.

protests. The article, by Bettina Aptheker, continued, "One questions whether the political climate has anything to do with the current posture of the UC administration, and its reluctance and apparent refusal to permit SDS to hold a conference on “Black Power and Its Challenge" on campus.”[4]

Although the SDS challenged the university administration regarding its lack of “educational objectives” claim, they never connected racism as the source of such nonsense.” SDS predicted that the administration would not allow the conference to take place without negotiations, but remained confident of receiving eventual approval and continued with their plans.[5]

The final agreement did not come until four days prior to the conference. It required a time restriction for the conference to end by six o'clock in the evening, as stated in the original administration guidelines and based on the perceived threat of outside disruption if the conference went into the evening. If any of the above conditions were not met, or if the University determined a reasonable likelihood that good order could not be maintained, the University explained they would provide notification to SDS that their approval of the application would be

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[4] The Daily Californian ,10/7/66, p.12.
[5] The Daily Californian ,10/7/66, p.12.

canceled. The Students for Democratic Society realized the difficulty in maintaining control and negotiated an "escape clause" stating they were only responsible for disruptions "insofar as this is within control of Campus SDS."[6]

Although finally approved, one more obstacle confronted the Black Power conference and the Students for Democratic Society. One day after the headline of The Daily Californian flashed "An Agreement at Last!," [7]another read "Afro American Rally Will Oppose SDS." The newly formed Afro-American Student Union had called a noon rally to denounce the black power conference as "manipulated by whites." The AASU also sent a letter to the featured speaker, Stokely Carmichael, describing the meeting as "farcical," "insidious" and "detestable." The Black student group voiced their problems with the conference at a noon rally but Don Davis, President of the AASU, proclaimed prior to the rally that "the conference was not in the best interest of the concept of black power." He alluded to manipulative aspects in the conference and promised to reveal them publicly at the noon rally. "I personally don't think it's desirable to educate whites on black power when such a significant portion of the black community is still uneducated on the subject," Davis

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[6] The Daily Californian, 10/25/66, p.l.
[7] The Daily Californian, 10/25/66, p.l.

told The Daily Californian. "One of the things that black power means is we reserve the right to call our own conferences." The AASU had front page space for their public criticism of the conference, but an article on the rally (which was considered small because it only attracted a crowd of 800)"[8] and the concerns Davis alluded to were not reported by The Daily Californian the following day.

Criticism of the Black Power Conference by the AASU came from an ideological, rather than a personal position. Black students on campus had organized the first Black student group and based most of their organizing on community work. Some of the Black students were involved in off-campus organizations in the community, including Davis who participated in a reading group with Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Black Power, as a concept and a slogan, was just emerging and Black students at Berkeley were immersed in a climate of rising black consciousness. Revolutionary consciousness dominated the minds and actions of the AASU. When the SDS pushed to bring Black Power and Stokely Carmichael to the university, the Black students found fundamental problems with the white intellectual community being educated on the concept before the Black masses. Although the AASU objections did not stop the

[8] California Monthly, December, 1966, p.7.

conference from coming to Berkeley, the issue became a major momentum builder for the new organization."[9]

The SDS never responded to the battle with the UC administration by specifically questioning or raising the issue of race and/or racism as an aspect of the negative reaction to the Black Power Conference. But in a statement issued the day of the conference, the SDS stated that although a predominantly white group, it concurred with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that the source of racism lay in the white community. "It is our obligation to confront this racism," they clarified, "the white middle class must be made to confront the gap between its professed belief in American ideals and the reality of its segregated existence....we believe we must hear from the spokesmen for black power if we are intelligently to reflect that position in our discussion with whites."[10] Black students spoke out in their criticism of the SDS-organized Black Power Conference and SDS responded. Thus, the issue of race first arose out of the need for SDS to clarify how they could bring Black Power, a new aggressive and pro-active movement for and run by Black people, to the Berkeley campus by a predominantly white student group. In addition, SDS inspired the small number of Black

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[9] Interview with Don Davis, April 1999.
[10] California Monthly, December, 1966, p.7.

students on campus to organize and articulate their perspective on the conference.

Black Power Day drew close to 13,000 people whom Stokely Carmichael termed the "white intellectual ghetto of the West." They trickled in throughout the day to hear Ron Karenga (Watts activist), Clayborne Carson (Watts activist), James Bevel (Southern Christian Leadership Coalition), and keynote speaker Stokely Carmichael. Most who attended were white. They responded to Carmichael tumultuously and in a "spirit of unanimity." Carmichael noted the shift in the struggle for black civil rights as it ushered in a new ideology that stressed Black Power. White American society, he warned, needed to "move over or we're gonna move over you." In comparing the situation of Blacks to that of Jews in the 1930's, he declared, "This is not 1942. If you play like Nazis, we are going to play back."[11] Carmichael emphasized that democracy had not worked, questioning the effort to "Headstart, Uplift and Outward Bound us into society." The crowd's reaction intensified when Carmichael began criticizing the "illegal and immoral" war in Vietnam. He encouraged the crowd to "say no to the draft," and declared, "there is a higher law than that of a racist named MacNamara, a

[11] California Monthly, December, 1966, pp.6-7.

fool named Rusk, and a buffoon named Johnson." Carmichael concluded his speech in a hushed tone, saying "this country is uncivilized ... we refuse to be the therapy for white society any longer.[12]

Although Carmichael had been the most anticipated speaker, other participants were also well received. They condemned non-violence as a viable tactic in the ongoing civil rights struggle, charged that liberals were ineffective in furthering the "Negro cause," and questioned the "progress" of recent years. Even though the talks were highly critical, all of the speakers "stressed the basic contiguity of the peace and black power movement" and attacked the Johnson administration for the war in Vietnam, as well as the California gubernatorial candidates Edmund Brown and Ronald Reagan.[13] Virtually absent from the speeches were connections of the Black Power struggle to specific problems confronting Black students at the University. In the spring quarter of 1966, a survey revealed that racial and ethnic minorities made up 7.02 per cent of U.C. Berkeley students. "American Negroes" comprised 1.02 percent or 226 students. Based on the 1960 census, 5.6 per cent of the California population was Black. Of the 26,063 registered students, some 24,858 responded to the survey which was considered the first racial and ethnic

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[12] The Daily Californian,10/31/66, p.1:16.
[13] The Daily Californian ,10/31/68, p.1:16.

survey taken by a major university. That same quarter, for the first time, the chancellor appointed a special assistant to recruit more racial and ethnic minority students.[14]

When the conference ended, the shift on campus reverted from Black Power back to the anti-Vietnam war movement it had originally interrupted. Draft resistance began in earnest in 1967 and the percentages of those who thought involvement in the war was a "mistake" leaped from 32 percent in February to 46 percent by October of the same year.[15] Clearly, advocates and leaders of Black Power also considered the war in Vietnam to be immoral. Each of the conference speakers condemned the "right to take a man and train him to be a killer."[16] The controversial Black Power conference had dominated the campus newspaper since the beginning of the Fall quarter, giving it more attention than any other issue in a decade when the Berkeley campus was immersed in ongoing protests. Black Power emerged to gain control of a movement that was changing its focus and direction. The fact that the U.C. Berkeley, as an institution, operated on a singular standard of excellence based on values derived from a white European experience had always been clear. With the appearance of the Black Power Movement the significance of the white European centered focus became "dramatized as a characteristic of a racist society."" In urging a boycott of Black Power Day, Black students at U.C. Berkeley thought it hypocritical for a White organization to put together this type of conference. But, the number of Black students on campus was small and their public reaction to the conference came only three days before it convened. The small

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[14] California Monthly, July-August, 1966, p. 45.
[15] Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage, pp.291,283.
[16] California Monthly, December, 1966, p.7.

number of Black students and their belated condemnation weakened the effectiveness of their appeal. After Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, the first formal proposal for a Black Studies Department was released. [9]

The Berkeley experience provides some insight into the differences in the oppositional consciousness of Black and White students. Social theorists have distinguished between "social responsibility" movements such as the anti-war movement that address social problems that affect humanity in general and "liberation" movements such as the Civil Rights movement that are based on historical structures of domination.[10] Black student activists generally reflected the latter perspective while White activists were motivated by the former perspective. Black students sought "free space" or "autonomy" within the university while White students sought a transformation of the university itself.

Oppositional consciousness has continued to manifest itself on college campuses in the form of women's studies, queer studies, environmental studies, peace and conflict studies and other non-traditional programs. However, it remains important to note that the consciousness engendered as a member of an historically subordinated group such as women or gays and lesbians remains qualitatively different than those who voluntarily choose to identify themselves as environmentalists or peace activists. Only by recognizing their qualitatively different experiences can they hope to work together toward a more just society.

[1] Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps (eds.), *Book of Negro Folklore* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1958), p. 508.
[2] Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, p. 141.
[3] Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris, (eds.), *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) p. 5
[4] Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power* (New York, Vintage, 1968) p.
[5] William L.Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1992), p. 67.
[6] Michel and Bobo, p. 10
[7] Savio, et. al.
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[8] See, for example, Doug McAdams, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), Sarah Evans, *Personal Politics*
[9]

[10] Equality based special movements are the third type of social movement described by Mansbridge and Morris. They are defined as movements addressing social problems that disproportionately affect particular oppressed groups such as the pro-choice movement.

Gitlin, The Sixties Years of Hope, Days of Rage pp-291, 283.

California Monthly, December, 1966, p.7.

George Napper, Blacker Than Thou, Michigan, 1973, p.55.

The Daily Californian, 4/9/68, p.12.

Napper, Blacker Than Thou, p.56-7.

The Daily Californian, 9/24/68, p. 1.

The Daily Californian 11/21/68, p.13.

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The Daily Californian, 9/24/68, p.l. and 10/17/68, p.l.

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The Daily Californian 11/22/68, p.1 and 11/25/68, p.l.

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The Daily Californian, 10/l/68, p.16.

The Daily Californian, 11/l/68, p.24. 12

The Daily Californian, 10/28/68,p.17.

The Daily Californian, 9/24/68, p.1:14.

The Daily Californian, 10/18/68, p.1:6.

The Daily Californian, 10/23/68, p.l.

California Monthly, December, 1966,p.4.

The Daily Californian, 10/25/68, p.18.

The Daily Californian, 10/29/68, p.1.

Napper, Blacker Than Thou, p.61.

The Daily Californian, 10/l/68,p.16.

The Daily Californian, 10/30/68,p.l.

The Daily Californian, 11/4/68, p.1:16.

The Daily Californian, 11/8/68, p.1:9:10.

Napper, Blacker Than Thou, p. 57.